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**MEASURING RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCES
IN THE PERCEPTION OF MILITARY ROLES**

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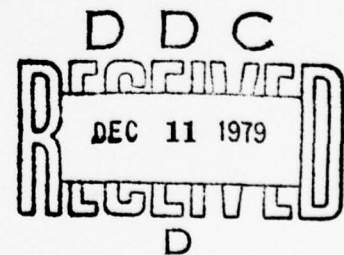
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IN THE PERCEPTION OF MILITARY ROLES

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MEASURING RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTION OF MILITARY ROLES

→ The United States Army differs from the military of other nations in that its members are drawn from exceptionally diverse cultural groups. A single unit in the Army may contain representatives from the American Indian, Mexican-American, and Polynesian cultures as well as the majority White group. The impact of these differences is felt primarily by the minority soldier. It is up to him or her to assimilate the norms, values, and attitudes of the White majority. If this assimilation does not occur, his behavior is subject to misinterpretation by White peers and superiors; and in turn, his perceptions of the Army will be similarly affected. The ultimate outcome of these misunderstandings will be detrimental to both the minority soldier and the unit in which he serves.

This report will outline some preliminary findings of research being conducted on the nature of cultural and subcultural differences in attitudes, values, and normative beliefs of recruits, and the impact of these differences on the minority soldier's ultimate productivity. The specific focus of this paper will be on existing differences in perceptions of military roles among the major racial and ethnic groups presently found in Army accessions.

← ABSTRACT

Three basic roles were examined in this research: the enlisted man, the NCO, and the officer. These roles were considered only in their relationships to one another, not as single entities. In sum, five interactions were examined: Enlisted Man to Enlisted Man (EM-EM role), Enlisted Man to NCO (EM-NCO role), Enlisted Man to Officer (EM-Officer role), NCO to Enlisted Man (NCO-EM role), and Officer to Enlisted Man (Officer-EM role).

METHOD

SAMPLE

The data presented herein was collected as part of a large-scale study of the socialization of the American soldier. Specifically, a total of 3,647 male Army recruits in their first week of Basic Combat Training were given questionnaires and were asked to indicate their racial or ethnic groups by selecting one of fifteen listed groups. For purposes of analysis, these fifteen groups were later collapsed into six categories: White, Black, Spanish-American, Pacific, Native American and Other. The size and composition of each category is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
COMPOSITION AND SIZE OF RACIAL/ETHNIC CATEGORIES IN SAMPLE

Category	N
White	2044
Black	800
Spanish-American	356
Mexican-American	
Puerto Rican	
Pacific	200
Guamanian	
Filipino	
Hawaiian	
Samoan	
Native American	74
American Indian	
Aleut	
Other	173
Other	
Chinese	
Japanese	
Korean	

INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

Because of the culturally heterogeneous nature of this sample, a number of technical difficulties arose in developing an instrument to be used in measuring role perceptions. Triandis et al.¹ demonstrated that not only are there cross-cultural differences in the behaviors seen as typical for a given role, but these differences extend to the very dimensions along which role-related behaviors are seen to vary. Additionally, the Triandis study demonstrated that these dimensions of role variations could be grouped into two categories. The first category includes all cultural-specific dimensions, i.e., those unique to a given culture. For example, the study showed that among Greeks, roles are viewed according to the degree consensual types of behaviors are incorporated. Examples of these behaviors would be "to share the same religion as" or "to have the same political beliefs as." This type of

¹Triandis, H.C., Vassiliou, V., & Nassiakou, M. Three cross-cultural studies of subjective culture. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, (1968), 8(4), Part 2, 1-42.

behavior is seen as typical in Greek intra-family roles (e.g., mother-daughter, uncle-niece) and roles of close friendship. Because this dimension does not appear in any non-Greek culture, it is a cultural-specific dimension.

The second category of role dimensions includes the four culture-free dimensions of role perceptions observed in every culture studied thus far. They are:

1. Associative vs. Disassociative - To help or to like vs. to hate or to avoid.
2. Hostility vs. No Hostility - To quarrel with, to cheat, to hit.
3. Superordinate vs Subordinate - To order, to advise vs. to obey, or to be dependent on.
4. Intimacy vs. No Intimacy - To love, to cry for.

In measuring differences in role perceptions between diverse cultural groups, it is essential to ensure that role perceptions are measured along equal dimensions and that the dimensions are appropriate to the cultural group considered. In developing the measurement instrument used in the present study, role perceptions were measured along the culture-free dimensions identified by Triandis and his associates.

The measurement instrument used in this study basically consisted of a list of twenty behaviors (see Table 2). For each role, recruits were requested to rate the frequency with which first-named role partners would typically perform each of the behaviors with respect to latter-named role partners. For example, in measuring the NCO-Enlisted Man role, subjects were asked to indicate whether an NCO would admire an enlisted man, inspect the work of an enlisted man, etc. The responses were rated on a five-point scale ranging from 0 for "Never" to 4 for "Always."

The twenty behaviors used in this task were chosen through a procedure adapted from that employed by Triandis et al. in developing the role differential. A pilot study was conducted, from which a list of over 250 behaviors was derived by having a sample of 47 enlisted men perform a sentence completion task. For each of the five roles, subjects were required to complete ten sentences linking the two role partners. More specifically, subjects were asked to complete the stems: "The Enlisted Man _____ the NCO." "The Officer _____ the Enlisted Man," etc. The frequency with which each of these behaviors was generated was determined, and the 100 most frequently occurring behaviors were subsequently rated by seven judges on each of the four culture-free dimensions listed earlier. A five-point rating scale was used for these ratings, ranging from 0, indicating "Not At All" (Associative, Hostile, etc.) to 4, indicating "Extremely" (Associative, Hostile, etc.). Those twenty behaviors having the most extreme ratings on at least one of these dimensions constituted the final Military Role Differential instrument.

Table 2

LIST OF BEHAVIORS CONSTITUTING THE MILITARY ROLE DIFFERENTIAL

To admire
To inspect the work of
To harass
To obey
To hate
To depend on
To advise
To question the authority of
To be a friend of
To judge
To give a hard time to
To explain his actions to
To avoid
To salute
To agree with
To ignore
To like
To chew out
To hit
To give an order to

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Responses given by subjects in the main study on the final Military Role differential were subjected to principal axes factor analyses followed by varimax rotations. A separate factor analysis was performed on the responses given for each role. The purpose of these analyses was to determine whether the attempt to build the four culture-free factors into the instrument had been successful, and to determine what differences in dimensionality, if any, existed among the five roles. Tables 3-7 summarize the results of these analyses.

In general, culture-free factors that were "built into" the instrument emerged as expected from these factor analyses. The only exception was the Intimacy factor, which failed to emerge from any analysis of roles. The most probable reason for this is the formal nature of military roles which deems considerations of intimacy inappropriate.

Table 3

EM-EM ROLE: HIGHEST LOADINGS ON MILITARY ROLE
DIFFERENTIAL FACTORS AFTER VARIMAX ROTATION

Factor 1 - Hostility (% of common var=58.2)

- .73 To give a hard time to
- .67 To harass
- .66 To hate
- .61 To chew out
- .59 To hit
- .58 To ignore
- .47 To avoid
- .47 To judge

Factor 2 - Associative (% of common var=26.7)

- .57 To like
- .53 To be a friend of
- .41 To agree with

Factor 3 - Superordinate (% of common var=9.2)

- .50 To inspect the work of
- .48 To advise

Factor 4 - Subordination (% of common var=5.9)

- .48 Salute
-

Table 4

EM-NCO ROLE: HIGHEST LOADINGS ON MILITARY ROLE DIFFERENTIAL
AFTER VARIMAX ROTATION

Factor 1 - Superordination (% of common var=54.0)

- .60 To question the authority of
- .55 To advise
- .49 To judge
- .47 To inspect the work of
- .42 To harass
- .41 To give a hard time to

Factor 2 - Associative - Disassociative (% of common var=26.3)

- .60 To like
- .58 To hate
- .54 To be a friend of
- .50 To avoid

Factor 3 - Hostility (% of common var=13.0)

- .68 To chew out
- .63 To hit
- .53 To give an order to
- .43 To give a hard time to
- .43 To harass
- .41 To ignore

Factor 4 - Subordination (% of common var=6.8)

- .45 To obey
 - .44 To depend on
-

Table 5

EM-OFF ROLE: HIGHEST LOADINGS ON MILITARY ROLE DIFFERENTIAL
FACTORS AFTER VARIMAX ROTATION

Factor 1 - Associative-Disassociative (% of common var=51.0)

.58 To like
.55 To be a friend of
-.55 To hate
.48 To admire
-.47 To avoid

Factor 2 - Hostility (% of common var=27.0)

.67 To chew out
.65 To hit
.59 To give an order to

Factor 3 - Superordination (% of common var=9.1)

.54 To harass
.50 To give a hard time to
-.40 To obey

Factor 4 - Subordination (% of common var=8.1)

.40 Obey

Table 6

NCO-EM ROLE: HIGHEST LOADINGS ON MILITARY ROLE DIFFERENTIAL
AFTER VARIMAX ROTATION

Factor 1 - Superordination-Subordination (% of common var=67.5)

- .68 To order
- .61 To advise
- .60 To chew out
- .56 To judge
- .56 To inspect the work of
- .55 To give a hard time to
- .53 To obey
- .50 To harass
- .47 To question the authority of

Factor 2 - Hostility (% of common var=19.5)

- .54 To ignore
- .53 To hate
- .49 To avoid
- .49 To give a hard time to
- .47 To hit
- .46 To harass

Factor 3 - Associative (% of common var=13.0)

- .60 To like
 - .55 To be a friend of
 - .46 To agree with
 - .40 To admire
-

Table 7

OFF-EM ROLE: HIGHEST LOADINGS ON MILITARY ROLE DIFFERENTIAL
FACTORS AFTER VARIMAX ROTATION

Factor 1 - Superordination-Subordination (% of common var=56.4)

- .62 To give an order to
- .59 To advise
- .54 To inspect the work of
- .52 To judge
- .49 To chew out
- .44 To question the authority of
- .43 To obey

Factor 2 - Hostility (% of common var=22.7)

- .61 To give a hard time to
- .57 To hate
- .55 To harass
- .55 To ignore
- .50 To hit
- .47 To avoid

Factor 3 - Associative (% of common var=20.9)

- .64 To like
 - .61 To be a friend of
 - .50 To admire
 - .49 To agree with
 - .45 To obey
-

Although the three dimensions of superordination, association and hostility emerged from analyses of all five roles, they differed in form from one role to another. Examination of these systematic differences allows some insight into the perceived nature of these roles.

The form of the Superordinate vs. Subordinate factor is contingent on the role being considered. It appears as a bipolar factor for the NCO-Enlisted Man and the Officer-Enlisted Man roles, but breaks into two separate factors for the other three roles. This could be interpreted as a certain ambivalence in power relationships in the military environment. This factor structure indicates that although an officer or an NCO can act toward an enlisted man in either a superordinate or subordinate manner, an enlisted man can perform behaviors containing a component of both. Thus, although military regulations require enlisted men to obey commands given by NCOs or officers, it appears this can be done in such a way as to allow enlisted men an opportunity to assert themselves as equals or superiors to those giving the orders. The fact that superordination and subordination emerge as separate factors with the Enlisted Man-Enlisted Man role is most likely a consequence of the variability of power relationships among enlisted men. For example, whereas most enlisted men interact as peers, a recruit in BCT who is chosen as a squad leader can act in a somewhat superordinate fashion toward other recruits and expect subordinate behavior from them.

Similarly, there are differences in the structure of the Associative vs. Disassociative dimension across the five roles. Among the roles of subordinate to superior (i.e., Enlisted Man-NCO and Enlisted Man-Officer) this factor is bipolar in form. Among the remaining roles, however, this factor emerges as a unipolar associative factor, with disassociative behaviors tending to load on the Hostility factor instead. A likely interpretation of this difference rests on the power differences of the various role partners. An expression of disassociation, of dislike, from a peer or superior contains a component of threat because these individuals are free to later express their dislike in a more directly hostile manner. Because of this implied threat, disassociative acts performed by peers or superiors could themselves be seen as hostile. However, when the individual performing disassociative acts is of less power and status than the object of his antipathy, no threat is implied because the power differences preclude any direct display of aggression. Hence, disassociative acts performed by subordinates remain just that, and are not seen as a form of hostility.

In sum, it appears that from the recruits' viewpoint enlisted men have somewhat more latitude in expressing themselves toward superiors than superiors have in expressing themselves toward enlisted men. These results indicate that, to a degree, enlisted men can be superordinate in their relationships to NCOs and officers without directly violating the requirement that they be subordinate, e.g., dislike can be expressed toward superiors without being considered a hostile act that might require a response in kind.

Table 8 presents mean ratings given to behaviors that had the highest loading on each factor within each role. Again, the ratings were performed on a scale using 0 to indicate that a behavior never occurred; 1, that it seldom occurred; 2, that it sometimes did and sometimes did not occur; and 3 and 4, that it occurred frequently or always, respectively. As can be seen, these data contain no great surprises. Associative acts occur with the greatest frequency among enlisted men; Hostility and Superordination are most infrequent in the relationship of enlisted men to superiors, and Subordination is most infrequent between an enlisted man and his peers. These means will be used in the measurement of cross-cultural differences.

To analyze these cross-cultural differences, a standardized factor score for each factor within each role was computed for each subject. The subjects' scores on each factor were used as the dependent variable in a one-way ANOVA using racial/ethnic group as the independent variable. The results of these analyses are summarized in Table 9.

Table 8
MEAN RATINGS GIVEN TO BEHAVIORS THAT HAD LARGEST LOADINGS
ON EACH FACTOR WITHIN EACH ROLE

	Associative	Hostility	Superordinate	Subordinate
<u>Role</u>				
EM-EM	2.64	1.53	2.40	0.70
EM-NCO	1.84 ^a	0.65	1.03	2.81
EM-OFF	2.04 ^a	0.29	1.56	3.69
NCO-EM	2.01	1.49	2.16 ^b	--
OFF-EM	1.67	1.47	2.79 ^b	--

^aAssociative vs. Disassociative factor

^bSuperordinate vs. Subordinate factor

Table 9

SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF ANOVAS PERFORMED TO DETERMINE EFFECT
OF RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP ON MILITARY ROLE PERCEPTIONS

					Neuman-Keuls ^{a,b}				
	F	p(F)	t Wht - non-Wht	p(t)	X Smallest				X Largest
<u>EM-EM Role</u>									
Associative	2.32	n.s.	.59	n.s.	Nat	Span	Wht	Blk	Pac
Hostility	33.4	<.0001	7.9	<.0001	Pac	Blk	Span	Nat	Wht
Superordination	4.20	<.003	3.4	<.001	NatA	Pac	Blk	Span	Wht
Subordination	5.38	<.0001	2.92	<.004	Wht	Span	Nat	Blk	Pac
<u>EM-NCO Role</u>									
Assoc vs Disassoc	19.13	<.0001	6.42	<.0001	Wht	Span	Nat	Blk	Pac
Hostility	5.78	<.0001	4.25	<.0001	Wht	Span	Blk	Pac	Nat
Superordination	2.05	n.s.	1.22	n.s.	Span	Wht	Blk	Nat	Pac
Subordination	16.56	<.0001	5.20	<.0001	Blk	Pac	Nat	Span	Wht
<u>EM-OFF Role</u>									
Assoc vs Disassoc	13.38	<.0001	5.42	<.0001	Wht	Span	Blk	Nat	Pac
Hostility	9.28	<.0001	4.85	<.0001	Span	Wht	Blk	Pac	Nat
Superordination	12.93	<.0001	5.11	<.0001	Wht	Span	Blk	Nat	Pac
Subordination	27.68	<.0001	6.84	<.0001	Pac	Blk	Span	Nat	Wht
<u>NCO-EM Role</u>									
Associative	15.29	<.0001	5.6	<.0001	Wht	Nat	Span	Blk	Pac
Hostility	22.02	<.0001	5.7	<.0001	Span	Blk	Pac	Nat	Wht
Superord vs subord	23.02	<.0001	5.0	<.0001	Pac	Blk	Span	Wht	Nat
<u>OFF-EM Role</u>									
Associative	27.87	<.0001	6.70	<.0001	Wht	Nat	Span	Blk	Pac
Hostility	8.23	<.0001	2.92	<.0001	Pac	Span	Blk	Wht	Nat
Superord vs Subord	15.93	<.0001	4.89	<.0001	Pac	Blk	Span	Nat	Wht

^a Groups underlined by the same continuous line are not significantly different.

^b Wht=White; Blk=Black; Span=Spanish-American; Pac=Pacific; Nat=Native American.

n.s. = non-significant ($p \geq .01$)

This table illustrates that the effects of racial/ethnic groups are pervasive. With the exception of associative behaviors in the Enlisted Man-Enlisted Man role, and superordination in the Enlisted Man-NCO role, racial/ethnic group membership had a consistent effect on military role perceptions. Although all such differences are of interest, the differences to which we will direct our attention are those existing between Whites and the various minority groups under consideration. In order to determine whether the cross-cultural differences that emerged from our findings were due to differences between Whites and minority recruits or rather were due to differences among the minority groups themselves, an a priori test was performed between the White group and all the non-White groups combined. The results of these analyses are presented in columns 3 and 4 of Table 9. As can be seen, these results directly paralleled the overall ANOVA results. Hence, there are clear and consistent differences in the perception of military roles between White and minority recruits. The nature of these differences can be discerned through an examination of the Neuman-Keuls test results in Table 9.

The group whose role perceptions stand out in greatest contrast to Whites is the Pacific sample. In comparison to Whites, the Pacific sample:

1. Saw more positive affective bonds being shared by enlisted men and their superiores.
2. Saw NCOs and officers as less superordinate toward enlisted men and saw enlisted men as less subordinate toward NCOs and officers.
3. Saw enlisted men as more superordinate and more hostile toward officers.

These differences can be summarized as typifying an image of the Army more egalitarian than the image held by Whites. Power relationships between the three rank categories are de-emphasized through a degree of "leveling," i.e., superiors are seen as more subordinate and subordinates are seen as typically more superordinate. This de-emphasis is accompanied by an emphasis on positive affective bonds between the rank categories. Thus, as perceived by this group, the relationship between rank categories is defined more by mutual regard than by power and status.

This viewpoint is shared to a large degree by the Black sample. They also, in contrast to the Whites, see enlisted men as less subordinate to NCOs and officers, and the behavior of NCOs and officers toward enlisted men as less superordinate and more associative. In the same manner, they see NCOs as typically behaving with less hostility toward enlisted men, and enlisted men as displaying more associative behavior with regard to NCOs. Finally, Blacks see less hostility and subordination among enlisted men than do Whites.

This pattern existed only to a limited degree among the Spanish American subjects. This parallel with the Pacific and Black samples was restricted for the most part to their perceptions of the NCO-Enlisted Man and the Officer-Enlisted Man roles. Here Spanish-Americans saw less superordination, more associative behaviors, and, in the case of NCOs, less hostility directed at enlisted men. In addition to this, Spanish-Americans saw subordination as less typical of the behaviors among enlisted men.

The final minority group, the Native Americans, had role perceptions almost identical to the White sample. The single exception was in their perception of more hostility directed at officers by enlisted men.

CONCLUSION

Two clusters of military role perceptions can be seen in these results. The first cluster, consisting primarily of the perceptions of the Pacific and Black samples, are in clear contrast to those of the White and Native American samples. The first two groups, and to a more limited extent the Spanish-Americans, see relationships between officers, NCOs, and enlisted personnel based more on a norm of solidarity and less on a power and status differential than do the latter two groups.

Given these perceptual differences, and assuming that the various cultural groups act in accordance with these perceptions, it is likely that minority enlisted personnel, especially Blacks and Polynesians, are likely to see White superiors as haughty and autocratic and as expecting more deference than their position warrants. These minority soldiers, in turn, are likely to be viewed by their White peers and superiors as tending to be insubordinate and "pushy." The possible consequences of these mutual perceptions are manifold and troublesome. It must be kept in mind, however, that the role perceptions examined in this study are those of new recruits who have not yet been assimilated into the Army. Hence, the possibility of negative consequences is dependent on the persistence of these differences in role perception throughout at least the early phases of a minority soldier's Army career. A determination of the extent to which these perceptual differences and their consequences persist will be a part of our continuing research efforts.